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8 December 2004

RUS43120.E

Russia: Treatment of ethnic Russians in Kalmykia and availability of state protection
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the treatment of ethnic Russians in Kalmykia and availability of state protection was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information may be useful.

Agence France Presse (AFP) reported on 27 June 2002 that the president of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, "claim[ed] credit for ensuring peaceful relations among the ethnic Kalmyk, Russian Orthodox and Muslim communities."

AFP added that towns and villages "are liberally dotted with portraits of Ilyumzhinov in the company of famous men," among which is Russian Orthodox patriarch Alexy II (Agence France Presse 27 June 2002).

In a radio interview, the chairwoman of the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), Lyudmila Alekseyeva, stated that, after monitoring the situation in all of Russia's 89 regions she considered Kalmykia to be "among the champions" [i.e. the worst] with regards to human rights abuses (Radio Russia 4 July 2003).

In 8 December 2004 correspondence with the Research Directorate, a lawyer working for the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG) indicated that Kalmykia has a bad record for human rights. She also stated that violations of civil and political rights "do not discriminate [against] any group of population" and that they "cannot prove that ethnic Russians suffer from any kind of discrimination..." (8 Dec. 2004).

In the weekly *Moskovskiye Novosti*, Lyudmila Alekseyeva of the MHG reported that her organization will "insist on bringing those guilty of beating up protesters in Kalmykia to account" (12 Nov. 2004). No reference to the ethnic origin of the protesters was made in the article (*Moskovskiye Novosti* 12 Nov. 2004). Information regarding the details of these incidents could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France Presse (AFP). 27 June 2002. Bernard Besserglik. "Kremlin Ponders Candidate to Oppose Kalmykia Maverick." (Dialog)

Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG). 8 December 2004. Correspondence from a lawyer.

Moskovskiye Novosti. 12 November 2004. Lyudmila Alekseyeva. "Networks Are Better Than Verticals." <<http://www.mosnews.com/commentary/2004/11/12/humanrights.shtml>> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2004]

Radio Russia [Moscow, in Russian]. 4 July 2003. "Human Rights Body in Russia Homes in on Urals Republic." (BBC International Reports/Dialog)

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Carnegie Moscow Center, Caucasian Regional Studies

(Brussels), Center for Russian Studies Database (Oslo), The European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (Utrecht), Freedom House, Hokkaido University Slavic Research Center, Human Rights Watch, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Minorities at Risk Project, Minority Rights Group International, *The Moscow Times*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of the Shuttle: Minority Studies Page.

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